

SCHOOL GOVERNANCE CHARTER
AMENDMENT ACT OF 2000

Mr. DAVIS of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 4387) to provide that the School Governance Charter Amendment Act of 2000 shall take effect upon the date such Act is ratified by voters of the District of Columbia.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 4387

by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. WAIVER OF CONGRESSIONAL REVIEW PERIOD FOR SCHOOL GOVERNANCE CHARTER AMENDMENT ACT OF 2000.

Notwithstanding section 303 of the District of Columbia Home Rule Act or any provision of the School Governance Charter Amendment Act of 2000, the School Governance Charter Amendment Act of 2000 shall take effect upon the date such Act is ratified by a majority of the registered qualified electors of the District of Columbia voting in a referendum held to ratify such Act.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. DAVIS) and the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. DAVIS).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. DAVIS of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H.R. 4387, the bill under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Virginia?

There was no objection.

Mr. DAVIS of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 4387, introduced by my colleague, the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON), waives the 35-day congressional review period on the upcoming June 27 referendum. It will allow the results of that referendum to be enacted immediately. If the referendum is successful, the District of Columbia may move forward with the creation of a hybrid school board. This waiver will allow candidates for the new school board to be on the ballot for the November 7 election. H.R. 4387 will allow the choice that District residents make on June 27 to go forward without the delay it would otherwise face due to our own shortened legislative calendar.

The mayor and the D. C. Council have come together to craft this compromise referendum that will return accountability to the D.C. school board and to the District of Columbia schools. The new school board will be comprised of five elected and four mayor-appointed members. I believe this reasonable compromise will remove much of the politics that has characterized the D.C. school boards in the past.

Most of all, this was not crafted from Congress, this was crafted from the

city itself and the city leaders working together. I think if we want to continue to have democracy to be successful in the city, we have to allow them this flexibility. So I am eager that once this referendum is passed, or whatever happens to it, that we can move ahead and enact it immediately in time for the November 7 election.

I hope that the new school board will return to its primary mission of oversight and management of the schools. It is my goal to assist the city in returning accountability to the schools. For too long the education system has not worked for the children of the Nation's capital. The mayor and the council have worked together to ensure that this situation does not continue. I commend them for their dedicated efforts to achieve reform.

I also want to thank the chairman of the Committee on Government Reform, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) for his expeditious consideration of this waiver. I urge passage of this legislation so that the District may move forward on June 27.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

□ 1530

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I very much appreciate the action of the chairman of the full committee in moving this bill forward. Had it not moved, there would have been a cascading effect on a referendum that is required in order to settle the matter of the school board in the District of Columbia, the central issue facing the City at this time.

The School Governance Charter Amendment Act of 2000 waives the congressionally mandated 35-day layover period for a D.C. referendum that will be considered by the voters in the special election of June 27. The referendum restructures the D.C. School Board to have five elected and four appointed members.

This local legislation is a result of an agreement between D.C. Mayor Tony Williams and the City Council. If the referendum passes, H.R. 4387 would waive the layover period so that candidates can seek signatures and run for the new board without legal challenge. This waiver is necessary because petitions for signature will be available on July 7 and the expiration of the 35-legislative-day congressional layover period may not come until early October. The waiver of the layover period will allow elections of the new school board to proceed without legal challenge on November 7.

H.R. 4387 is also noncontroversial and was unanimously passed in subcommittee and full committee. It has the full support of the mayor and the City Council of the District of Columbia. I strongly urge passage.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. DAVIS of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, let me just summarize. Again, I thank the gentlewoman for taking the lead on an issue that was very controversial at one point in terms of how we structure the school system in the District. There is no question that it has failed.

I think we need to understand that before there was an elected D.C. Council, before there was an elected mayor, there was an elected school board. This has been a long Democratic tradition in the city.

We also, though, recognize there is a need for accountability in the decisions being made at the school system. I think when we got all the entities together, this was the compromise that they have worked out. They are going to submit it to the voters. I do not think anything could be clearer or fairer than that. We just need to give it a chance to succeed.

So, again, I thank my colleague for stepping up to the plate on this. I know this has been an issue of some controversy in the city, but it is that kind of leadership that is going to turn this city around.

Mr. Speaker, I urge adoption of this measure.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his remarks. I want only to note that at a time when it was not clear that the mayor and the City Council would come together, the chairman stepped back and let them see if they could reach an accommodation. They did reach an accommodation that is now before the people of the District of Columbia and they will decide.

I thank the gentleman very much for his work on this bill and on so many other bills for the District of Columbia.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MILLER of Florida). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. DAVIS) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 4387.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12 of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until approximately 6:30 p.m.

Accordingly (at 3 o'clock and 33 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess until approximately 6:30 p.m.

□ 1927

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro